

PYROTECHNICS

The When-I-Get-Around-To-It
Newsletter of General
Technics

Perpetrated by Jeff Duntemann
Assisted This Issue by a Box
of Triscuits (Hint-Hint)

PYROTECHNICS #1
1976

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**GENERAL
TECHNICS**

TO YOU WHO ARE ABOUT TO RECIEVE THIS DATA: YOU ASKED FOR IT!

Why were you singled out to recieve this first issue of
PyroTechnics? Because you:

- A. Are sick of the New Wave getting all the press.
- B. Are tired of knuckling under to the Dorsai.
- C. Secretly crave a do-it-yourself Trekkie Blinker.
- D. Have an open-end-wrench fetish.
- E. Wandered into the wrong con suite and now you're stuck with it.
- F. Bugged me unmercifully until I gave you one.

If you checked off four or more of the above circumstances,
you are a Techie. Sorry, you've caught it, it isn't curable, and
it will haunt you until the day you die.

Pretty soon, your mouth will begin to water as you pass by any
Radio Shack, Lafayette, or American Science Center store. Scientific
American, Sky and Telescope, Popular Electronics, and The Worm Runners'
Digest will multiply in your bedroom closet until there is no more room
for your Argyle sox. You will stop finding bedbugs in your bed and
encounter 14-pin DIPS instead. (With the pins up. Ouch.) You will
begin lighting the kerosene lamp in your garret with a CO₂ pulse laser.
You will bitch if your shaving mirror is not a quarter wave paraboloid.
You will modify your SX70 to take instant holographs and go into
wraparound porno pix.

In short, you're a lost cause.
Unless you fall in with us.
General Technics.

Ghetto? Who's kidding whom?

Now that the academics are taking over science fiction, it matters less how the hero will re-enter normal space with a gaping hole in his Bergenholm field converter than whether or not his anal repression will result in a profound change in his perception of an absurd universe.

Arrgh!

As bad as things have gotten, there's still something in SF worth saving. A bunch of people got together shortly after Chabanacon '75 and recognized that techies are the true heirs of Hugo Gernsback and all unbastardized science fiction. Furthermore, those people found that, unlike the pornography field, people who read about technology tend to do it, as well. That is, if you make your own telescopes or kilowatt linear amplifiers, chances are you prefer Larry Niven to Barry Malzberg.

From those findings, the group abstracted two purposes for the organization later named General Technics:

1. To further the cause of technology in science fiction and fandom.
2. To pool technological resources of techies and pursue the fundamental skill of tinkering.

It took several months to hash out the details. Here they are:

General Technics is a guild (for lack of a better term) of SF reader-tinkerers. There are two membership levels. To qualify as an Apprentice Techie you need only like tech fiction and have a sincere desire to get into tech tinkering. That and three American bucks will deliver Pyro Technics to your door until the three bucks won't cover further postage.

Satisfy any Master Tinkerer of the first two requirements and grease his palm with the third, and you're in. If you live in Outer Slobovia, write me a letter proving you like tech fiction and somehow demonstrating a willingness to get into tinkering, and enclose three bucks. That's just as good.

Becoming a Master Tinkerer is a damned sight trickier.

You have to present a masterpiece to a committee of three Master Tinkers. This masterpiece must be a gizmo or process of your own making. Heathkits and the like don't make it.

What kind of gizmo?

Basically, something technological, difficult, and perfected.

It might seem at first that General Technics is an electronics hobbyists' organization. This is only because a good many of us are into electronics. Also, electronics is uniquely well-suited to tinkering. Parts are cheap, small, and can be used again and again, like girders in an Erector set. You can do it on your kitchen table. It is capable of some really amazing results. Hence its popularity.

However, any other technology is just as valid. A telescope with an eighth-wave parabolic primary is a good masterpiece. So is a laser built from the ground up. Goes triple if you make your own tube. A chemical process for making good epoxy glue would probably qualify.

It must be difficult. No crystal sets. Crystal sets are what you build while you're studying superhet theory. A superhet which tunes one station (and only one) at a time is a masterpiece.

It must be perfected. Paul Revere wasn't a master tinker because his pots leaked. It's because the didn't. If your laser gun shoots only when you kick it, or if your telescope makes every star look like an English muffin on fire, it's back to the drawing board. Make your mistakes at home. Show us your masterpiece.

We don't limit masterpieces to what would be considered "modern" technology. If you can make a good sailboat, you're in. Even something which is considered neither modern nor somehow "useful" may qualify. I would call a beautiful, flyable forty-cell tetrahedral kite a worthy masterpiece.

Nor must it be complex. Just difficult. If you can actually make your own vacuum tube; that is, blow and seal the envelope, make the elements, suck the air out, and build a test rig to show that it amplifies, you're a far, far better techie than I.

You'll have to talk to a Master Tinkerer about your masterpiece, and submit a proposal in writing. More about that in later issues. In the meantime, talk to us. This is also a social organization.

Now we have a membership. What are we going to do, then?

Mostly, have fun. A Techie Room at cons to glare at schematics in. A sense of "us" to stand against the uneasy feeling of "them." Somebody always available to talk about Doc Smith with.

Also, to pool resources. If enough of us want to buy a particular item, we can mass-order it and get a discount. If somebody has a knotty problem in his field, maybe somebody else has a solution. Swap and barter. Trading services. ("Hey, you need a vacuum pump? I got a goodie! You wouldn't happen to have a lathe, would you? Hmmm...")

Other things, limited only by our imaginations. Technology has no other limits.

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Now, what of PyroTechnics? We're setting it up as the newsletter of General Technics. It's not a fanzine as such, since you have to be a member to subscribe, and we won't be hawking them at cons. They'll be lying around wherever techies are present, though, and nothing in them will be any sort of secret.

The idea is to keep in touch with other techies between cons. This means I gotta have input from the field. Otherwise it will end up a running monolog from yours truly, and I must remind you: GIGO. So let me know what you're up to. What you're building. What you were building until it blew up. What you're reading. Book reviews, both of techie non-fiction and tech SF. Plans for gadgets. Helpful Hints for the Compleat Workshoppe, Dungeon, and Opium Denne. Humor. Satire. Entertaining drivel of all kinds. If you can paraphrase the Yellow Pages and make it sound good, we'll print it. WANTED: FOR SALE: TO TRADE: RIDE NEEDED TO MIDAMERICON: LONELY TECHIE WISHES TO MEET SIMILARLY INCLINED ALTAIR 8800 TO DEVELOP NEW HARDWARE: WHO WAS THE MUTHER WHO BORROWED MY FRAMMISTAN AT CONFUSION AND DIDN'T GIVE IT BACK??

You get the idea.

This is the only issue you'll be able to grab for free. (The first one's always free.) After that you have to be In. If you want to be In, get hold of one of the people on the following list, or write to me at:

6458 N. Fairfield
Chicago, Illinois 60645

IF YOU WANT TO BLAME SOMEBODY, BLAME THESE PEOPLE:

Present Master Tinkerers:

Jeff Duntemann
6458 N. Fairfield
Chicago, Illinois 60645

Ben Kuehlhorn
4819 N. Keystone
Chicago, Illinois 60630

George Ewing
Cheboygan Area High School
Cheboygan, Michigan 49721

Doug Price
Rm. 1057 E. Ogg Hall
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

Gus Flassig
Kathy Echterling
1904 N. Burling
Chicago, Illinois 60614

Tullio Proni
1309 Wells Place
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49001

Jim Fuerstenberg
624 Elder Lane
Winnetka, Illinois 60093

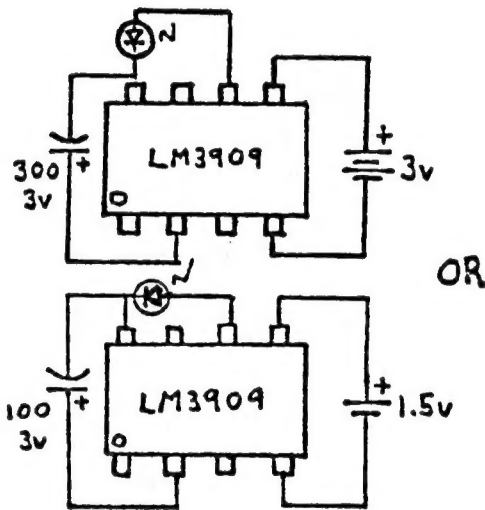
Steve Johnson
3109 N. Kilpatrick
Chicago, Illinois 60641

*****GIZMO OF THE MONTH DEPT.*****

FLASH! (Pardon the expression) AN IC OF, BY, AND FOR SCIENCE FICTION
FANDOM!!!!!!

We've hit the big time, gang. An integrated circuit designed by Carl Kleiner for his trekkie blinkers has been picked up by National Semiconductor. It's got a number and ten pages of application sheets.

Meet the LM3909. It will flash for months on a single penlight battery. No more embarrassing fadeouts during the all-night Star Trek reruns. No more hassling with tenth-watt resistors. An LM3909, a small LED, and a 300mf, 3vdc electrolytic will do the job.



Can't get much simpler than this. For that Ultra-Bright smile, fit one into that empty filling you've been meaning to have fixed.

You can get your own LM3909 from Digi-Key, Box 677, Thief River Falls, Minn. 56701. 83¢ apiece. Write them for their catalog first. They have a \$5.00 minimum order and you might want to pick up on some of the other goodies they offer. It's a good outfit. They ship fast and don't rip you off.

By the way, Mr. Kleiner has the patents on this little gem, so for God's sake don't try to sell one. He'll hold his breath until he turns purple, and then sue you.

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GENERAL TECHNIQUES

6458 N. FAIRFIELD CHICAGO IL 60645

Somebody asked about common property?

Well. We have 100 sheets of good rag stock paper with the above letterhead on it. The purpose of it is to write official looking letters to companies with my nifty IBM Selectric Typewriter and Carbon Paper Ribbon. Maybe these companies will part with manuals or free samples. I've written to a couple without success, but these things take time. Maybe they're onto us.

I paid \$5.15 out of my pocket to get them printed up. I'll ask for voluntary contributions, but I'll be nasty about passing out any resultant goodies to anybody who hasn't anted up at least a quarter.

I would also like suggestions as to who to write to with our stationery, and what to ask those people for. The address will only be good until October 1, when my lease runs out, so let's get busy and use them up. If you want some yourself, that's cool, but obviously anything you send for will come here anyway.

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Don't forget, you lucky MidAmerican members: Get those Hugo nominations in!! Let's not let the New Wavers get all the goodies this year!

George Ewing and I are both eligible for the JWC Award, and the two of us are shamelessly begging for nominations. In case you're pure of heart and won't nominate a man just because he's in your club, here's where we appeared: George in Analog, September '74. I am in NOVA and ORBIT 17, edited by Harry Harrison and Damon Knight, respectively.

That's about it for this issue. I'm putting it to bed so I can go to bed. Minicon is coming up fast, and Steve is breathing down my neck. Okay, okay, here it is. Next time don't make me write the whole thing myself.

DUNTEMANN'S THREE LAWS OF MACHINE INTELLIGENCE:

- I. Just because a machine can think doesn't mean it has to.
- II. Just because a machine is aware of its own existence doesn't mean it has to be impressed.
- III. Any machine which willingly imitates a human being is crazy.

(Shut up, Isaac. I didn't ask you.)

READ THIS!
IT'S IMPORTANT!

This back issue of PYROTECHNICS is a few years old, which means that the addresses printed herein are no longer valid. PYRO's new address is this:

PYROTECHNICS
C/O Mary Lynn Skirvin Johnson
901 Lorlyn Dr. #3B
West Chicago, Ill. 60185

To subscribe, you need only send a check, money order (in US funds), or International Reply Coupons, payable to Connie Trembley; in one of the following amounts:

UNITED STATES - \$4.00 a year for four issues.

CANADA - \$5.00 a year.

OVERSEAS - \$9.00 a year.

This includes 3 regular 10 page issues, one larger 20 page issue (due out in the fall), and a FREE ad of 100 words or less to be placed in the classified section. At last, a chance to unload that 'boat anchor' you bought at last year's Hamfest!

Maximum subscription length: 2 years.

PYRO is also available in trade for submissions of art and articles. Please write for guidelines, or refer to issue #39. (#39 stated that we did not give contributor's issues, but this has since been changed.)

Back issues of PYRO are available for four - US 25 cent stamps per issue. Currently, we have limited quantities of #39, #40, and #41. And, as of April first, we have reprinted a small number of issue #1 and it is available for two 25 cent stamps. In the future, we hope to have others, but it will be erratic. Canadian or Overseas persons can send us a postal money order for one dollar, or IRCs (available at your local post office) that total the correct amount.

Thank you for observing all safety precautions.